

HOP-O-MY THUMB

BY CLIFTON JOHNSON



BEDTIME WONDER TALES

Eugene Fillburn

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THE BABES IN THE WOOD

THE BRAVE TIN SOLDIER

THE FOX AND THE LITTLE RED HEN

GOLDEN HAIR AND THE THREE BEARS

CINDERELLA

PUSS IN BOOTS

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD

THE STORY OF CHICKEN-LICKEN

Additional books will be added
to this series from time to time.



The wood-cutter's family goes to the forest
(Page 14)

BEDTIME WONDER TALES

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BY

CLIFTON JOHNSON

ILLUSTRATED BY

HARRY L. SMITH

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The books in this series of Bedtime Wonder Tales are made up of favorite stories from the folklore of all nations. Such stories are particularly enjoyed by children from four to twelve years of age. As here told they are free from the savagery, distressing details, and excessive pathos which mar many of the tales in the form that they have come down to us from a barbaric past. But there has been no sacrifice of the simplicity and humor and sweetness that give them perennial charm.

The sources of the stories in this volume are as follows: Page 11, England; 34, Grimm; 39, Africa; 56, Norway; 60, Scotland; 75, Greece; 81, Ireland; 89, Andersen; 121, Japan.

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HOP-O'-MY-THUMB

I

LEFT IN THE FOREST

THERE was once a wood-cutter and his wife who had seven children, and these children were all boys. None of them was large enough to do much toward earning a living, and their parents had to work very hard to get food and clothing for them.

What made matters worse was that the youngest child was sickly and weak, and he was so small that his father and mother called him Hop-o'-my-Thumb. Yet the little weak boy was gifted with a great deal of sense, and though he never had much to say, he noticed all that went on around him.

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The year that Hop-o'-my-Thumb was five, and his oldest brother was twelve, the harvest failed. Only half as much corn and potatoes as usual were raised on account of lack of rain. So, as the weeks passed, the wood-cutter and his wife had more and more difficulty in supplying their large family with food.

Finally their last penny had been spent, and there was only a single loaf of bread left in the house.

They must starve as soon as this last loaf was eaten.

That evening, after the children were all in bed, the father and mother sat by the fire thinking sadly of the dismal fate that awaited the family.

"My dear wife," the wood-cutter said at length, "a lingering death seems destined to be the fate of all of us. But I cannot bear to see our children die of hunger. There-

fore I am resolved to lose them tomorrow in the forest.”

“That would be too dreadful,” the wife objected.

“But they cannot be worse off than they are at home,” the wood-cutter continued; “and perhaps the fairies will take care of them. You and I will go very deep into the forest with the seven boys, and while they are busy tying up fagots we will slip away and leave them.”

“No, no!” the wife exclaimed, “I could never do such a thing.”

“But if we don’t do that,” the wood-cutter said, “they will die here before our eyes, crying with hunger.”

He kept on arguing until his wife consented to his plan, and then she went weeping to bed.

The parents thought the children were all asleep while they talked. But Hop-o’-my-

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Thumb was wide awake. He heard what was said, and he never slept any that night for thinking of what he would do.

Early in the morning he crept out of bed, ran to a brook near the house, and filled his pockets with tiny white pebbles. Then he went indoors.

By and by the family ate half of the one loaf of bread, and started as usual for their day's work in the forest. The father led the way, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb, who came along behind all the others, dropped the little white pebbles one by one from his pockets.

They kept on into the very thickest, gloomiest part of the woodland. There the father started chopping with his ax, and the mother and children picked up the brush and began to tie it into bundles.

Thus they worked until late in the afternoon. Then the parents stole away, and as

soon as they were out of their children's sight they hurried back to their home.

For a long time they sat silent in the lonely house. The sun went down, and it was getting dark when there came a rap at the door. Before they could respond, in walked a man who had been sent by the lord of the manor with a present of ten shillings and a haunch of venison.

"Good day to you," the man said. "My lord, the baron, is sorry for the distress of his people. He is going to help them, and those who have large families like you are to get the most."

The man had food and money to deliver to other suffering households, and he hurried on his way.

When he had gone the wife exclaimed: "Oh! if only our children were here to eat of this nice venison. Let us go to the forest and find them."

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“No,” the husband said sorrowfully, “it would do no good to seek them now. If the fairies have not taken care of them, they must have been eaten by wolves before this time.”

Then the mother wept and would not be comforted. “I want my children!” she wailed.

II

LOST AGAIN

BUT the children had not been taken care of by fairies, and they had not been eaten by wolves.

As soon as they discovered that they were alone, Peter, the oldest boy, began to call, "Father and mother, where are you?"

No voice answered him, and then he and all the other little boys, except Hop-o'-my-Thumb, ran hither and thither shouting for their parents and crying.

Hop-o'-my-Thumb waited until he could make himself heard. Then he said: "Brothers, you need not be alarmed. Our father and mother have left us here, but I will lead you safely home."

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“Why did they leave us?” Peter asked.

In reply, Hop-o'-my-Thumb told them what he had overheard, and how he had strewed the white pebbles to guide them back. He ended by saying: “Just follow me. It will soon be dark, and we must start at once.”

He hurried along, keeping his eyes on the line of pebbles, and the others followed him. They reached home safely, but because their parents had abandoned them, they were afraid they would not be welcomed. So instead of going in, they huddled under a window at the back of the house to listen.

They heard the man come with the money and the venison, and after he had gone they heard their mother begin to cry. Then they ran around to the front of the house and in at the door, shouting, “Here we are, mother!”

She hugged them every one, and though

she continued to shed tears, they were tears of gladness and not of sorrow. The wood-cutter was no less rejoiced. He started a fire, and soon some slices of venison were broiling before the flames. When the meat was ready, the family sat down to the best supper they had eaten for a long time.

Several weeks passed, and while the venison and the money lasted the wood-cutter got along very well. But the famine grew worse and worse, and finally the lord of the manor could not send his tenants any more supplies.

Again there was nothing to eat in the wood-cutter's home but a loaf of bread, and he concluded that his family must surely starve. He and his wife talked the matter over late one night, and decided to take the children into the forest and lose them a second time.

They talked in whispers so that Hop-o'-

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my-Thumb should not know what they said, even if he chanced to be awake. He was not asleep any more than he had been the other time, and he had such keen ears that he heard what was said in spite of his parents' precaution.

He determined to get more pebbles in the morning, but when morning came, the parents kept a sharp watch of him, and would not let him go out of the house.

This troubled him greatly at first. However, the mother gave each of the boys a slice of dry bread for their breakfast, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb said to himself, "I can use bread crumbs instead of pebbles."

So he put his slice of bread into his pocket. The wood-cutter and his family went deeper than ever into the forest this time, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb followed behind the others and scattered bread crumbs all the way.

They spent the day in working, as was

their custom, but toward evening the father proposed that the children should play a game of hide and seek. While they were playing, he and the mother hurried off and left them.

When the children found that they had been deserted again, there was much bitter crying, but Hop-o'-my-Thumb said: "Do not weep, my brothers. I will take you home."

They started, intending to follow the trail of bread crumbs, but the birds had eaten them all up. The children were very much distressed.

"Well," Hop-o'-my-Thumb said, "we must not waste time in tears. Come along, and we will see if we can find some shelter for the night."

Hop-o'-my-Thumb led the way. Darkness came on, and the wind among the trees seemed to the children like the howling of

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wolves, so that every moment they thought they would be devoured. They hardly dared speak a word.

Presently Hop-o'-my-Thumb climbed to the top of a tall tree to look about for some path out of the forest. He discovered no path, but far away a light was shining.

“There must be a house where that light is,” he said.

III

AT THE OGRE'S CASTLE

WHEN Hop-o'-my-Thumb climbed down to the ground from the tall tree, he could not see the light, but he knew which direction to take. The little boys hastened along, and by and by came out of the forest. There they saw right before them a great castle with the light that Hop-o'-my-Thumb had seen shining through an open door.

They went to the door, and looked in. A wrinkled old woman was busy at a fireplace roasting a whole sheep, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb rapped to attract her attention.

She turned and looked at them. "What do you want?" she asked.

"We are poor children who have lost our

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way in the forest," Hop-o'-my-Thumb said, "and we beg you, for charity's sake, to grant us a night's lodging."

"Alas! my little darlings," the woman sighed, "you do not know where you are come. This is the castle of an ogre who would like nothing better than to eat you. I am the cook here, and I know very well what he likes to eat."

"Then what can we do?" Hop-o'-my-Thumb asked. "If you refuse to give us shelter, the wild beasts will tear us to pieces in the forest."

"Perhaps I can hide you," the woman said. "Come in, and I will do the best I can."

As soon as they entered the room, she shut the door, and the children sat down by the fire to warm themselves. They had not been there long when they heard heavy footsteps outside.

“That is the ogre,” the old woman said in a whisper to the children. “Make haste, and crawl under the bed.”

No sooner were they out of sight than the ogre walked in. “Is my supper ready?” he asked, and sat down at the table.

The woman called in another servant, and the two of them lifted the sheep that was roasting before the fire onto a great pewter platter.

Then they took up the platter and placed it before the ogre. The sheep was half raw, but he liked it that way.

When he had finished eating, he began to sniff right and left. “I smell fresh meat!” he said.

“It must be the calf I have skinned and hung in the pantry for your breakfast,” the cook told him.

Then the ogre looked toward the fireplace and saw lying there a little shoe that one of

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the boys had taken off. He stamped over to the hearth and picked up the shoe.

“What is this?” he demanded in a terrible voice.

“Why, that must be a shoe which belongs to your oldest daughter’s doll,” the cook said.

At that moment, poor Peter, who happened to have a bad cold, sneezed.

“Aha!” the ogre exclaimed, shaking his fist at the cook, “you have been deceiving me, and I would eat you, if you were not so old and tough.”

He dragged the children from under the bed and never gave the least heed to their appeals for mercy. He would have eaten one or two of them that night, but the old woman said: “See how lean they are. They have been half starved. They will be much fatter if we feed them for a few days.”

The ogre took up Hop-o'-my-Thumb and

pinched his arms. "You are right," he agreed. "This child is nothing but bones."

Then the woman gave the boys a good supper. While they were eating, she said: "I'm afraid it's little I can do to save you now that the ogre knows you are here. Even if you could get away from the castle, which is not likely, what hope is there for you?"

"The ogre has a pair of magic boots that he only needs to put on to be able to go seven leagues at a stride. The boots become large or small to fit the feet of whoever wears them. If I could get one of you boys out of the castle, I might give him the boots. Then he could escape. But what would become of the others? No, no, my poor lads, your chances of living aren't worth that"—and she snapped her fingers.

After supper the old woman put the boys to bed, and they were so tired that they fell asleep at once. They did not wake till morn-

ing. All that day Hop-o'-my-Thumb was on the watch for some chance to escape. He failed because the ogre's daughters had been ordered by their father to keep the boys from straying.

There were seven of the daughters. They had small gray eyes, and large mouths, and long sharp teeth. All of them were young and not very vicious yet; but they showed what they would be, for they had already begun to bite little boys. So you may be sure that their captives did not in the least enjoy their company.

IV

ESCAPE AND PURSUIT

WHEN night came, and every one in the ogre's castle had gone to bed, Hop-o'-my-Thumb lay awake until all the others were asleep. Then he roused his brothers, and whispered, "Wake up; we must be off."

They all dressed quickly and quietly, and he led the way out a back door into the garden. By climbing up some vines that grew on the wall there they got outside. They did not dare go far for fear of wolves. So they crept into a heap of straw that lay beside the wall and waited for daylight.

Hop-o'-my-Thumb thought he could find the way home by keeping along the edge of the forest, and as soon as there was light

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enough to enable them to see, they started for their home.

The ogre was not an early riser, and he did not think of the boys until after he had eaten breakfast. He was very angry when they were not to be found.

“Quick!” he shouted to the old woman cook, “bring me my seven-league boots, that I may go and catch the little rascals.”

With those boots he could go a great distance at a single step, and he would have caught the fugitives in almost no time if he had known just where to look for them. As it was, he hunted in every direction. He strode from hill to hill, and he stepped over wide rivers as if they had been brooks.

Late in the afternoon the boys had arrived within about a mile of home. They were hurrying along a hillside, intent on joining their parents before sundown, when they saw the ogre coming in their direction. Luckily he

had not seen them, and they scurried into a cave that chanced to be close by.

The ogre had done so much racing about that he was tired, and no sooner did he come to the hillside where the children were than he lay down near the very cave in which they had taken refuge. Then he went to sleep and snored with a sound like thunder that frightened the little boys very much.

“Now, brothers,” Hop-o’-my-Thumb said, “run home as fast as you can. I intend to follow you a little later. But first I’m going to see if I can get the ogre’s boots.”

When the other boys had gone, he crept up to where the ogre lay, and gently pulled off his boots. The boots were very large and heavy, but the moment Hop-o’-my-Thumb put his own feet into them they fitted him perfectly.

The ogre had been partly awakened when his boots were pulled off, and now he sudden-

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ly opened his eyes and sat up. He saw what had happened, and roared with anger.

Off went Hop-o'-my-Thumb, and the ogre jumped to his feet and gave chase. But he was no match for the speed of the little lad in the seven-league boots.

Not far from where the giant had lain was a precipice, and Hop-o'-my-Thumb stepped off this cliff to an opposite hilltop. The ogre, who was rushing after him, forgot that he did not have the boots on and that he needed to be cautious. He never paused when he came to the brink of the cliff, and down he went with a crash that made the rocks echo near and far. So ended the life of the savage ogre.

In his castle was a treasure room that had one little window to let in light. The old woman cook had told Hop-o'-my-Thumb of this window, and offered to let him out through it, but he did not accept her offer

because the window was not large enough to allow his brothers to escape that way also.

Now that the ogre was disposed of, Hop-o'-my-Thumb remembered the castle treasure room. "Unless I can get some money to buy food with," he said, "my father and mother and all the rest of us will starve. I must see what I can do."

So away he went, and the seven-league boots took him to the ogre's castle in a twinkling. There he slipped in at the little window of the treasure room and loaded himself with all the gold he could carry. Then he went home.

His father and mother were very happy to have their children all back, and with the money that Hop-o'-my-Thumb brought they got all the food they needed. Thus they were able to pass through the remainder of the famine period very comfortably.

V.

THE PARTNERS

A CAT and a mouse once agreed to do their housekeeping together. "Now let us prepare for winter by laying in a supply of food," the cat said.

So they bought a pot of fat. "But where can we put this pot so it will be safe?" the little mouse asked.

"I think the church would be the best place," the cat said, "for nobody would venture to steal there. We will hide the pot under the pulpit and not touch it till we are really in want."

So they hid the pot of fat in the church. But before long the cat began to have a great desire to taste it. "Little mouse," she said -

one morning, "a baby has been born at the home of one of my cousins, and if you do not object to staying alone to look after the house, I will go to the christening this very day."

"For goodness' sake, go!" the mouse responded, "and if you have anything nice to eat, think of me."

The cat left at once, but she did not go to any christening. No, she went straight to the church, crept to the pot of fat, and licked the top off. Then she strolled over the roofs of the town, and visited her friends. It was evening when she returned home.

"Oh, here you are at last!" the mouse said. "You must have had a merry time."

"Yes, things went off very well," the cat responded.

"What name was given to the child?" the mouse asked.

"Top-off," the cat answered.

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“Top-off!” the mouse exclaimed. “What a singular name! Is it a common one in your family?”

“I see nothing wrong with it,” the cat retorted. “Surely, it is no worse than Crumb-picker, as the last child among your relatives was called.”

About a week later the cat was again seized with a longing to visit the pot of fat, and she said to the mouse: “You must oblige me once more by looking after the house alone. A child has arrived at the home of another of my cousins, and I am invited to be present at the christening to-day.”

The kind little mouse was quite ready to oblige her partner, and the cat went to the church. There she ate from the pot of fat till it was half gone. When she got home the mouse inquired what the child had been named.

“Half-gone,” the cat answered.

“Half-gone!” the mouse repeated. “I never in my life before heard of so curious a name.”

A few days more passed, and the cat said to the mouse: “I have just been invited to another christening. I hope you do not object to my going.”

No, the mouse did not object. So the greedy cat marched off, and ate up the rest of the fat. She returned sleek and comfortable in the evening, and reported that the name of the third child was “All-gone.”

By and by winter came. No more food was to be picked up out of doors, and the mouse spoke to the cat about their pot of fat. “Let us go and fetch it,” she said.

“Very well,” the cat agreed, and they went to the church. They found the pot, but it was empty.

“Alas!” the mouse groaned, “now I un-

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derstand the meaning of those queer names. I see what sort of a partner I have had. Instead of going to christenings, you have been eating our fat—first Top-off, then Half-gone, then——”

“Stop!” the cat shouted. “Another word and I’ll eat you too!”

The mouse did not want to be eaten. So she raced out of the church, and never stopped till she was safe in her own hole. She did not go into partnership with any cat after that.

VI

THE HONEY TREE

ONE day, as Mr. Rabbit was roaming in the forest searching for food, he glanced up through the boughs of a big tree and saw some bees going in and out of a knothole.

“Well, well,” he said, “I’m in luck. There’s nothing I like better than honey, and I shall have a feast here. But this tree is on Mr. Lion’s land. I must be careful. Let me see—first I will go to town and ask some one to help me, for I can’t very well get the honey alone.”

So he went to town and stopped at the home of his friend, Mr. Rat. He was cordially greeted, and went into the house and sat down.

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“I have some honey in the forest, Mr. Rat,” he said. “Would you like to come and help me eat it?”

“To be sure I would,” Mr. Rat replied.

“We shall need a bundle of straw to smoke out the bees,” Mr. Rabbit said.

“I have plenty of straw in my barn, and we will go and get some of it,” was Mr. Rat’s response.

They got the straw, and off they went to the forest. When they arrived at Mr. Lion’s big honey tree, the rabbit pointed to the hole that the bees were going in and out of, and said, “Come on, we’ll climb up.”

They scrambled up the tree trunk, taking the straw with them. Then they set some of the straw on fire, smoked out the bees, and began to eat the honey. They were enjoying their feast and chatting merrily, when who should appear at the foot of the tree but Mr. Lion?

He looked up and saw them indistinctly through the leaves. "Ha!" he exclaimed, "some thieves are taking my honey." Then he called out, "Who are you up there?"

Mr. Rabbit whispered to his companion: "Don't say anything. That old fellow is crazy."

After waiting in vain for an answer, Mr. Lion roared angrily: "Who are you, I say? Speak, I tell you!"

Mr. Rat was so terrified by Mr. Lion's voice and words that he blurted out, "It's only us."

"See here," the rabbit whispered to the rat, "we have quite a lot of straw left in the crotch of that limb near you. Wrap it round me, except a few wisps that you can use to tie it on. Then call to Mr. Lion to keep out of the way, and throw me down. No doubt that will scare him so he will scamper off. As soon as he is beyond sight and

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hearing, we can ramble back to town at our leisure.”

Mr. Rat did as his friend suggested. He wrapped him well in the straw, tied it in place with two or three wisps, and then called to the lion: “Stand back, I’m going to throw some straw down. Afterward, I’m coming down myself.”

The lion stepped back out of the way, and down came the straw. But Mr. Lion was not scared. He sat looking up into the tree. That gave Mr. Rabbit the opportunity he wanted, and he crept out of the straw into some bushes. Then it did not take him long to run off to a safe distance.

After the lion had waited a minute or two, gazing up into the tree, he roared: “You said you were coming down. Hurry, and do so!”

The rat did not dare delay longer, and he descended. No sooner was he within reach

than Mr. Lion grabbed him, and asked, "Who was up there with you?"

"It was Mr. Rabbit," the rat replied. "Didn't you see him when I threw him down?"

"No, I saw nothing but a bundle of straw," the lion said.

Then he ate the rat and looked around for the rabbit, but he did not find him.

VII

MR. RABBIT'S TRICKS

THREE days after Mr. Rabbit escaped from Mr. Lion, he called on his friend, the tortoise, and said, "Let us go and eat some honey."

"Whose honey is it?" Mr. Tortoise inquired.

"Mine," the rabbit answered.

"Oh! all right, then I'm with you," Mr. Tortoise said, and away they went.

When they arrived at the great honey tree, they climbed up and began to eat. But soon Mr. Lion appeared. "Who are you, up there?" he called.

"Keep quiet," Mr. Rabbit whispered to the tortoise.

Neither of them said anything, and again the lion shouted, "Who are you, up there?"

Then the tortoise spoke to his companion, saying, "Mr. Rabbit, you told me this honey was yours, but I suspect that it belongs to Mr. Lion."

"Well, what if it does?" the rabbit retorted.

"I shall keep quiet no longer," Mr. Tortoise said.

So he raised his voice, and shouted to Mr. Lion, "It's us!"

"Come down!" the lion ordered.

"We're coming right down," the tortoise responded.

Mr. Lion was quite sure that one of the two in the tree was the rabbit. He had been keeping an eye open for him since the day he gobbled up Mr. Rat. "I've got him this time," he said.

The rabbit could see no use of delaying.

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So he went down first, and the lion caught him. "Now I'll eat you," Mr. Lion said.

"My meat is awfully tough," the rabbit declared. "It would be more tender so you could chew it and enjoy it a great deal better if you were to take me by the tail, Mr. Lion, and bang me against the ground a few times."

"I can do that easily enough," Mr. Lion said.

But the rabbit did not have much of a tail for him to grasp with his big clumsy paws. So when he was swinging him through the air, the tail slipped from his claws, and the rabbit ran away.

Mr. Lion was disappointed and angry. He turned toward the tree, and in a threatening voice ordered the rabbit's companion to descend.

The tortoise hastened to comply, and when he reached the ground the lion said: "I'm

going to eat you, but you've got a hard shell. How am I to get at your meat?"

"Oh! that's easy," Mr. Tortoise told him. "Just put me in the mud, and rub my back with your paw until my shell comes off."

So Mr. Lion carried the tortoise to the borders of a stream, placed him in the mud, and began to rub his back, as he supposed. But there were some good-sized rounded stones in the mud, and Mr. Tortoise contrived to slip away and leave Mr. Lion rubbing one of those stones.

Mr. Lion rubbed and rubbed until his paw was sore. Then he dug out the stone and saw that he had been outwitted.

"I didn't think that old tortoise would trick me," he grumbled. "I'll get even with him some day. But it is the rabbit who troubles me most. I'll settle accounts with him before I do anything else. I'm going to hunt that chap now until I catch him."

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Without delay he set off on his search. He stopped the first person he met, and asked, "Where is Mr. Rabbit's house?"

"His house is on the top of that mountain yonder," was the reply.

So the lion climbed the mountain. At length he came to the rabbit's house, which was a cave among the rocks, but he found no one at home. "Well," he said, "I'll hide inside, and when Mr. Rabbit and his wife return, I'll eat them both."

He went in and made himself comfortable, and late in the day along came Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit. Mr. Rabbit observed the lion's footprints on the steep path, and he stopped and said to Mrs. Rabbit: "You go back, my dear. Mr. Lion has passed this way. I think he must be looking for me."

At his request, she left to go to the home of some friends and wait until all danger was past. Then he followed the lion's foot-

steps and presently saw that they entered his house. "Oh!" he said, "Mr. Lion is inside, is he? I'll have to let him know he can't catch me that way."

So he retired a short distance and shouted: "How do you do, house?"

He waited a moment, and remarked loudly: "This is very strange. Every day, as I draw near to my house, I say, 'How do you do, house?' and the house always answers, 'How do you do?' There must be some one inside this afternoon."

The lion was waiting to seize Mr. Rabbit, and he was listening to every word. When he heard what the rabbit said he called out, "How do you do?"

Mr. Rabbit began to laugh. "Oho! Mr. Lion," he shouted, "so you're inside there. I'll bet you want to eat me. But first tell me where you ever heard of a house talking?"

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The lion perceived that he had been fooled again, and he responded angrily, "You wait until I get hold of you!"

"I think it's you who'll have to do the waiting!" the rabbit cried, and then he ran away.

VIII

THE END OF MR. LION

MR. LION followed Mr. Rabbit and did his best to catch him, but he had not succeeded when darkness came and put an end to the chase. He was on his trail again the next day, and the day after that. Finally he got hold of him among the mountain precipices.

It happened that there was a big overhanging piece of rock just above where they were, and the rabbit pointed up to it. "See!" he exclaimed, "that stone is about to fall and crush us."

Mr. Lion looked up and saw the overhanging rock. He was much alarmed, and leaped to one side. But the rock did not fall. Meanwhile the rabbit had skipped away.

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Another time the lion was going around a turn on a narrow path, and ran right into Mr. Rabbit. He grabbed him before he could escape, and the rabbit said: "Mr. Lion, I am tired of running away from you. So now I will go with you and be your servant."

"Very well," the lion responded. Then he took the rabbit home and set him to work.

A few days afterward Mr. Lion killed a zebra, and he said to the rabbit, "Now, my servant, cook me a piece of this zebra that I may eat."

So the rabbit collected some dry wood and made a fire. Then he hung a piece of meat on a stick over the flames, and as soon as it was ready, he said, "Open your mouth, Mr. Lion, and taste."

He put the meat into the lion's mouth, and the lion ate it. "That is very good," Mr. Lion said. "Hurry and cook me some more."

But this time the rabbit heated a stone in



Mr. Rabbit cooks meat for Mr. Lion

the fire till it was very hot. Afterward he took it up with two sticks, and said, "Open your mouth, Mr. Lion."

The lion opened his mouth, and Mr. Rabbit popped in the stone. The lion gulped it down, and it was so hot that it killed him. Mr. Rabbit then skinned Mr. Lion, and with the skin over his shoulder started for home. On the way he came to a hut where a hyena lived. He looked in and saw that the hyena was there asleep.

"This skin is heavy," Mr. Rabbit grumbled, wiping the sweat from his forehead. "I won't carry the thing any farther, but will stuff it with dry grass and prop it up at the entrance of this hyena's hut. Then I will hide and see what will happen."

He soon had the lion fixed to suit him, and by and by the hyena awoke and started to come out of the hut. To his great fright, he saw the lion standing before the entrance,

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and he dodged back. Again and again he peeked out only to retire trembling to the farthest side of the hut.

At last the rabbit heard him mumble: "I shall starve, if I stay in here. It would be better to try to rush past the lion and get away."

So out he dashed and was speeding away across the plain, when there came to his ears the sound of the rabbit laughing. Instantly he was convinced that a joke had been played on him, and back he came so quickly and unexpectedly that he succeeded in catching Mr. Rabbit.

He was very angry, and was about to eat his captive, when the rabbit said: "I am only a small mouthful. Spare me, and I will show you where a rhinoceros has just died."

"Well," the hyena responded, "go on, and I will follow, but if you deceive me I will kill you."

Then the rabbit went down to a river that was not far distant, and said: "The rhinoceros fell in here this morning and was drowned. If you put your nose to the water, you will smell him."

The hyena put his nose to the water to smell and find out if the rhinoceros was really there. Unluckily a big crocodile lived just at that spot. He seized the hyena, dragged him into the river, and ate him—and that is all there is to this story.

IX

GRANDSIRE BEAR

AT dawn, one summer day, a bear came tramping over the bog with a fat pig on his shoulder. When he got to the far side of the bog he was accosted by a fox who was sitting on a wayside stone.

“Good-day, grandsire,” the fox said. “What is that you are carrying so carefully?”

“Pork,” Bruin replied.

“Well, I have some dainty food too,” Reynard said.

“What is it?” the bear asked, laying down his burden.

“The biggest wild bees’ comb I ever saw in my life,” Reynard declared.

“Indeed, you don’t say so!” Bruin said, and licked his lips at thought of how good the honey would taste. “Will you swap it for some of my pork?” he asked after meditating a few moments.

“No, no,” Reynard responded. “I can’t do that.”

But after some further talk the fox said: “I will let you take one sup out of my honeycomb if you can be quicker than I am in thinking of three trees and repeating their names. In case I am quicker than you are, you must let me take one bite of your pig.”

“I don’t risk much,” Bruin thought. “Even if the fox wins, he can’t get a great deal of the pig in one bite. But if I win, I’m very sure I can get all the honey in one sup.”

Then he said to the fox: “Agreed; and now we’ll name the trees. Are you ready?”

“All ready,” Reynard responded.

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“Fir, tamarack, larch,” the bear growled. He was not angry, but his voice was always gruff, no matter how pleasant his mood.

“Ash, hemlock, willow,” Reynard cried.

He did not finish quite as soon as the bear, but Bruin had named only two trees.

“Larch and tamarack are different names for the same kind of tree,” the fox said. “So I’ve won,” and he pounced on the pig and took the heart out at one bite.

“You’ve taken the very best part of my pork,” the bear snarled. He made a grab at the fox, caught hold of his tail, and held him fast.

“Let me go,” the fox begged. “I’ll make amends. You shall have a taste of my honey.”

When Bruin heard that, he loosed the fox, and away went Reynard after the honeycomb. He soon returned and held it up to the bear, saying, “Here on this honeycomb

lies a leaf, and under the leaf is a hole, and that hole you are to suck.”

Bruin took the comb and put it up to his mouth, and the fox slipped the leaf off, leaped back a little distance, and began to laugh; for instead of a honeycomb he had handed the bear a hornet's nest as big as a man's head.

It was full of hornets, and they swarmed angrily forth. They settled on the bear, and stung him about the eyes and ears and mouth and snout. His attention was so engaged in getting rid of them that he gave no thought to Reynard, and the tricky fox escaped without any punishment.

X

ROB AND THE GNOMES

ROB CARGIL was a mason who went from town to town working at his trade. When he had done such jobs as he could find in one place he traveled to the next.

Once, while he was on the road, he overtook two men who were going to the same town he was bound for. So they trudged along together. Noon came, and the three sat down in a wood, a little aside from the highway. They intended to rest themselves and eat some food they had brought with them.

But hardly were they seated when they heard the hissing of a snake. They looked in the direction whence the sound came, and the

snake glided straight toward them. It was perfectly white in color, and fully four feet long.

Rob's companions were so terrified that they took to their heels, but he stood his ground. The snake lifted its head, opened its mouth, and threateningly ran out its forked tongue.

"Aha!" Rob exclaimed, "you would bite me and poison me with your venom, would you? Well, we'll see about that."

Then he gave the snake a vigorous blow with his cane that laid the creature apparently dead at his feet. Now he called to his comrades, and they came and examined the curious snake. Afterward the three ate their lunch, and lay down for a nap.

They slept about an hour, and when they woke they resumed their journey. The weather had become threatening, and Rob stopped at the next public house and engaged

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lodging for the night, but the other two went on.

In talking with the landlady, Rob told of killing the curious white snake.

"I would willingly give a half crown to see that white snake," she declared.

"Well," Rob said, "half crowns are none too plenty with me. I will go after the snake and bring it to you."

Off he started and soon returned with it. He put it down on the kitchen hearth, and the landlady gave him the half crown. Then she looked closely at the snake and muttered, "Yes, it seems to be quite dead."

She went about her work, and by and by supper had been eaten, and bedtime came. "Our house is crowded," the landlord said to Rob. "The best I can do is to give you a blanket and let you sleep in a corner of the kitchen on the floor."

"I might be worse off," Rob thought, "for

the night is cold and windy and I can hear rain falling on the roof."

He slept soundly until midnight, when he was aroused by a noise near at hand. He opened his eyes, and saw the landlady patting the white snake and heard her mumbling some words he could not catch. Evidently she was a witch.

Greatly to Rob's surprise, life returned to the snake, and it spoke to the woman, saying: "You have done me a great service. How can I reward you?"

"Bring me the magic holly berries I have long wanted," the woman replied.

"Very well," the snake said.

Then the woman opened the door, and the snake glided out. A half hour later Rob heard a rustling at the threshold. The snake had returned, and when the landlady went to the door Rob saw that the creature had a sprig of holly berries in its mouth. This the

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woman took, and the snake turned about and disappeared in the darkness.

The landlady carried the berries to the fire, put them in a little pot of water, and set the pot over some coals. In a little while the berries were simmering, and they filled the room with a most delicate and delightful odor.

After a time the landlady set the pot out at the edge of the hearth to cool. "That is the most wonderful drink in the world," she said. "It will be ready shortly."

She stood looking down at it a few moments. Then she remarked, "While I'm waiting, I may as well go to the pantry and slice the bacon for breakfast."

Away she went, and Rob Cargil rose on his elbow. "I wonder what sort of virtue there is in the stuff," he thought. "Certainly, I never before have smelled anything so delicious. I believe I will take a taste. A

few drops less will not matter to the landlady."

So he tiptoed over to the hearth, drank a hasty mouthful and set back the pot. "Whatever that is," he said, as he returned to his blanket, "it beats anything that I ever tasted before in my life."

The landlady soon appeared, took up the pot, and began to drink. She removed the dish from her mouth with an exclamation of anger. "The goodness has gone from this magic potion!" she cried. "Somebody has drank before me!"

She stepped over to where Rob Cargil lay pretending he was asleep, and looked at him suspiciously. Then she grabbed his shoulder and shook him with all her might. "You villain!" she shouted, "you have been drinking my magic potion!"

"I beg your pardon," he said, getting on his feet and releasing himself from her

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fury. "I only took a few drops. I meant no harm."

"Out of the house with you!" she shrieked, reaching for her broomstick, and he slipped through the door without further delay.

XI

TOO MUCH HELP

“FOOLISH man!” Rob muttered as he stumbled along the gloomy roadway. “Here I am turned out into the rain and the darkness all for that one sweet mouthful. I wish——”

He was interrupted by the sudden appearance in front of him of a strange little man, who seemed to have popped up out of the ground. Though short, the stranger was very powerfully built. In one hand he carried a heavy hammer, in the other an iron bar.

“What do you wish?” the dwarf asked.
“Tell me, and your wish shall be granted.”

“Who are you?” Rob inquired.

“I am one of the earth gnomes,” the dwarf

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replied. "When you drank that potion of magic holly berries, one thousand of us became your servants. Henceforth you must keep us busy. Whatever you wish done we will do."

"No doubt there is some joke in this," Rob said. "I don't believe a word of what you tell me. However, I'd just as soon let you know that the thing I particularly wish for just now is a comfortable house in which I can spend the rest of the night."

Immediately the gnome gave the earth a sharp rap with his hammer. In response, there swarmed up from the ground hundreds of other gnomes, who, to Rob's great fright and consternation, whisked him away he knew not whither.

He made up his mind that his last hour had come. But they soon stopped on a wild bluff beside the sea. Then his ears were stunned with the sound of innumerable axes



The earth gnome pops up before Rob

and hammers and saws and other tools close about him. In five minutes or so a handsome house had been completed, and it was furnished and lighted.

Now the gnome Rob had seen first came to him, and said: "Your orders have been obeyed. Here is the house for which you wished, and you can take possession at once. What shall we do next?"

"Oh! rest a while. Go on a vacation. I give you a holiday. You must be tired," Rob said.

"We need no rest," the gnome told him. "What we want is work, and you must find it for us."

The spot where they stood overlooked a broad bay, which, in the dim light, could be faintly seen reaching in from the sea.

"Well," Rob said, "if you must have work, there is that bay. Build a bridge across it. When the bridge is done, if I

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am still living at that time, come to me for more work.”

The gnomes hastened away, and Rob thought he was rid of them forever. He laughed heartily to think of the impossible task he had set them. After taking a look through his new house he went to bed.

When he rose the next morning and glanced out of his window toward the bay, he saw a great stone bridge stretching across the water nearly to the other shore. He was speechless with astonishment for some minutes. Then he exclaimed, “Why, this won’t do! Such a bridge will shut up the bay to all the shipping, and cause no end of trouble.”

He opened the window in haste, leaned out, and shouted, “Hold on there!”

His voice could not have been heard far by ordinary ears, but he had scarcely spoken when the old gnome with the iron bar and

hammer stood before him. "I am your servant to do whatever you wish," the gnome said.

"I didn't realize that you fellows were such workers," Rob explained, "and I didn't consider this bridge as carefully as I should have done. Don't you see it's going to spoil the bay? I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to pull the bridge to pieces."

"All right," the gnome responded; "we will set about the task immediately."

He was turning to leave when Rob called to him saying: "Just wait a minute. This is a very nice house you have built, but, if you can do so, I wish you would supply me with a couple of servants and something to eat."

"Your wants shall be attended to," the gnome said, making a low bow, and then he was gone.

Soon afterward Rob left his chamber and

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went downstairs. There he found two servants and plenty of food. Ever afterward he had everything he wanted with only the trouble of asking for it.

But there was one drawback to his happiness. He had to keep the thousand gnomes busy. They demolished the bridge in less than half a day, and at once flocked to Rob clamorous for more work.

He devised task after task until he was at his wits' end for anything more with which to busy his gnome workmen. They were always pestering him. No matter whether it was day or night, the moment they finished one job they came to him and could not be gotten rid of till he had given them another.

Rob thought he could have endured them if they had desisted from disturbing him after he had gone to bed. However, they were as likely to be banging and clattering about the house at midnight as any other time.

“Come out here, Rob Cargil! Come out here, Rob Cargil!” they would shout. “Come out here and give us more work to do!”

“Rest!” he said to them in despair on one such occasion. “For goodness’ sake, do rest! Go and sit down somewhere, and don’t come back here for a year.”

But they would not agree to any such proposal. Finally he shook his fist at them angrily, and shouted, “Well, then, go and make me a rope from sea foam and sand that will reach from here to the moon!”

The company of gnomes scurried away toward the sea, and Rob was never troubled by them afterward. When there was anything he wanted they would still come obedient to his wish, yet after they had done the service for which he asked, they returned to their rope-making. He no longer had to think up work for them. Sometimes he saw

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on the beach what looked like attempts to produce the rope he had ordered, but the gnomes evidently never succeeded in finishing it.

XII

A PEA AND A PRINCESS

ONCE upon a time there was a poor man named Penticles. As he was walking along the road one morning he found a pea, and he said to himself: "I will plant this pea. It will grow up and blossom, and the vine will soon hang full of pods. When the peas are ripe I will pick them. Instead of one pea, I shall then have many. But I will neither eat nor sell them.

"No, I will save every one and plant them. They too will increase. Again I will plant all I pick, and I will keep on planting and harvesting. Thus, in time, I shall have enough peas to lade some great ships—perhaps even twelve ships of the royal fleet."

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With this thought in his head, he went and presented himself before the king, and asked him for twelve ships to carry cargoes to a foreign port.

“What is it you have to lade the ships with?” the king asked.

“Peas,” the man replied, “peas all of my own raising.”

He forgot that he had as yet only the one pea he had found by the roadside, and that many years must pass before he could possibly have peas enough to fill twelve such great ships as those of the king.

The king was a good deal impressed by the request Penticles had made. “This man must be very wealthy,” he thought. “The peas alone are worth a fortune; and what vast estates he must possess to raise so enormous a quantity!”

The more he considered the young man’s words, the greater seemed his importance.

At length he addressed him, saying, "Are you married?"

"No," Penticles replied.

"Would you like to marry?" the king asked.

"Why, yes, if I could find the right sort of person for a wife," Penticles answered.

"I have a daughter whom I think worthy of you," the king said.

Penticles was afraid he would get himself into trouble, if he married the princess. But he did not like to refuse the king's offer lest the king should be angry and not let him have the twelve ships.

"Oh!" the king said, "you hesitate. You can do as you please. Will you take my daughter or not?"

Penticles concluded he had better say, "Yes," and see how things would turn out.

After he had consented, the king ordered apartments made ready for him in the pal-

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ace. Then, in order to assure himself that the man was really rich, he directed a servant to put ragged sheets and a torn coverlet on the man's bed.

"I want you to stay on watch all night," the king said. "You must see whether the man sleeps or not. If he is used to such a bed he will sleep well, and I shall know that he is poor and has deceived me. But if he is wakeful, I shall know that he is rich and cannot sleep on rags because he has been accustomed to perfect bedclothes."

Presently bedtime came. Penticles retired to his chamber and got into the ragged bed. The next morning the servant told the king that the young man had been restless the whole night through, and he doubted if he slept at all.

"Well," the king said, "that looks as if he was as rich as I suppose him to be. Now, tonight make up the bed properly with the

best and most comfortable bedclothes in the palace. Then see what happens.”

The bed was prepared according to the king's orders, and the servant watched as before.

In the morning he reported that Penticles had slept soundly the entire night.

“Very good!” the king exclaimed. “I thought from the first that he was all right, and I only wanted to make sure. We must begin preparations for the wedding at once.”

The king was confident that he was acting with caution and wisdom, but his test had not been as certain as he believed it to be. The young man had taken the pea into bed with him, for it was his greatest treasure on which his future fortune and the lading of the twelve great ships depended.

He was so anxious about the pea that he could not sleep the first night for fear it might get lost in the ragged bedclothes. The

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second night he had no such fear, and therefore slept soundly.

However, as the king knew nothing of this, he was satisfied, and the wedding took place. Later, when Penticles explained to him wherein his wealth consisted, he was inclined to grumble, but what was done could not be undone, and he made the best of the matter. After all, this son-in-law, by pursuing the plan he had formed for increasing the peas, might have, in time, as many as he imagined he would have.

So the king gave him land, and Penticles planted the pea. It grew and bore plentifully, and he raised more and more peas as the years passed. But I believe he never succeeded in raising enough to fill twelve of the king's great ships.

XIII

AN ENCHANTER BEATEN

It was the evening of the last day of October, long years ago. Conn, King of Ireland, with all his chiefs and mighty men had just sat down to supper at a long table in the great hall of the royal castle.

But though a splendid feast was before them, and though a thousand wax candles shed their light through the hall, causing the vessels of gold, silver, and bronze to shine, none of the warriors seemed to care about eating and drinking. Every face was sad, and there was little conversation, and no music.

The supper was about to begin when the voices of the doorkeepers were heard raised

in contention as if they would repel from the hall some one who wished to enter. There was a slight scuffle, and after that a strange youth came into the room.

He was dressed in the skins of wild beasts, and was armed with a wonderful spear that was studded with golden nails, and had a blade that quivered like a tongue of fire. Though of huge stature, his face was that of a boy, smooth, ruddy, and handsome.

He stood just inside the door, and said in a clear strong voice: "O Conn, King of Erin, I am Finn, a wanderer and hunter of the wilderness. I have come to claim hospitality of you on this eve of All Saints' Day."

"You are welcome, whoever you are," the king responded. "Sit here, O noble youth, at my right hand."

An attendant took Finn's spear and hung it on the wall where the weapons of the king's men were hung. Then Finn sat down

in the offered seat. Choice food and drink were set before him, of which he partook heartily.

When he finished, he said to the king: "There is sorrow in this hall of festivity, and I would know the cause of it. Perhaps I can help you."

"We have good reason for being gloomy," Conn told him. "A mighty enchanter dwells in the haunted northern mountains. Once every year at this season he comes hither and burns Tara, our royal city, by shooting balls of fire into it. We rebuild the city only to have it burned again."

"But why do not your valiant young warriors drive him away or kill him?" Finn asked.

"Alas!" Conn sighed, "all our valor is in vain against this enchanter. We post ourselves around Tara on all sides to defend the city, but he puts us to sleep by his magic,

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and then the place is at his mercy. For nine years he has destroyed Tara in that manner. This very midnight he will come again on his destroying raid, and all the women and children have been sent out of the city to keep them from perishing."

"I will do what I can to save Tara," Finn declared.

After that, all arose, took their weapons and went out to station themselves round the city, each bearing a flaming torch. Finn stood in front of the palace. In one hand he held his spear, and in the other a blue mantle, both of which he had received from a magician. The mantle could not be burned, and the spear was alive and had real fire in its blade.

The light from the torches shone on the buildings of the royal city, and on the winding river Boyne, which flowed past Tara on the north. Toward midnight there came

from far away toward the haunted mountains the sound of a fairy tune played soft and low as if on a silver flute.

Then the defending host shouted all together, and clashed their swords against their shields in fierce defiance. Yet, in spite of anything they could do, the low delicious music began to steal into their souls. The roar of the host faded away as in a dream, and two-thirds of the torches fell to the ground.

Finn roused himself by bringing the point of his spear so close to his forehead that it burned him. Now the flute music was succeeded by that of a stringed instrument, exceedingly sweet, and Finn drew the spear-point closer to his forehead.

His stout heart did not quail, even when he saw every torch fall, and observed only one of his companions still standing. That was the king, and he reeled and tottered, striving

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to keep on his feet. His efforts were in vain, and he too soon went down unconscious on the sward.

Finn passed through the fallen men, and stood alone on the dark hillside. He heard the feet of the enchanter splashing through the Boyne, and saw his gigantic form ascending the slopes of Tara.

When the enchanter observed that all was silent, he laughed and discharged a red fire-ball at the city, but Finn caught it in his magic blue mantle. The enchanter discharged a second fire-ball, and a third, and Finn caught them both.

It was plain to the enchanter that his power over Tara was at an end, and he turned to fly. Slow had been his coming, but swifter than an eagle's flight was his going, that he might get back to the protecting walls of his enchanted palace.

Finn let fall the mantle and pursued him.

However, he soon perceived that he could not overtake the fleet enchanter. Then he was aware that the magic spear struggled in his hand like a hound in a leash. "Go, if you will," he said, and cast it from him.

It shot through the dark night hissing and screaming. Finn followed, and on the threshold of the palace in the haunted mountains found the enchanter dead. The spear had passed quite through his body and was nowhere to be found.

Finn cut off the enchanter's head, and carried it back to the great hall in the castle of the king. Then he went out and shouted to the sleeping host, which gradually awoke. The men rose, dazed at first, and looked about, amazed to find Tara still standing.

When the captains came together, Finn said, "I have slain your enemy"; and he convinced them of the fact by taking them to the

king's castle and showing them the enchanter's head.

They were all greatly rejoiced and he was generously rewarded. He did many other brave deeds for the good of the country as the years passed, and at last he became king of Ireland.

XIV

THE TINDER BOX

A SOLDIER was marching along the highroad—right, left! right, left! On his back he had a knapsack, by his side was a sword. He had been to the wars and now was returning home.

On the road he met an old witch, and a horrid-looking creature she was. “Good-evening, soldier,” she said. “What a bright sword you have, my fine fellow, and what a large knapsack! I have good news for you. It is that you shall have as much money for your own as you want.”

“Thanks, old witch,” the soldier responded, “but how am I to get it?”

“Do you see yonder big tree?” the witch

said, pointing to a straight stalwart oak that stood by the wayside. "It is quite hollow within. Small branches are plenty on the trunk so that you can easily climb up. Half way to the top you will find a hole large enough for you to creep through, and you must go down into the tree. I have a rope for you to tie around your waist so I can pull you up, when you want to return."

"But what am I to do down in the tree?" the soldier asked.

"You are to get money," the witch replied. "As soon as you are at the bottom you will find yourself in a large hall. It will be quite light, for more than a hundred lamps are burning there. The hall has three doors.

"Open the first one, and you will enter a room in which you will find a large chest in the middle of the floor. A dog with eyes as large as teacups is sitting on the chest. But



The witch and the soldier

you needn't be alarmed. I will let you take my blue checked apron with you. Spread it out on the floor. Then go briskly up to the dog, seize him, and set him down on the apron. Afterward you can open the chest and take out as much money as you please, but it is all copper money.

“If you like silver better, you have only to go into the next room. There you will find another chest on which sits a dog with eyes as big as saucers. But don't be afraid of him. Lift him down onto my apron, and you can take as much money as you like.

“If, however, you prefer gold to either copper or silver, go into the third room. You will find a chest there too, and on it a dog with eyes as large as dinner plates. But you need not fear him. Just set him down on my apron, and he will do you no harm. Then you can help yourself freely to the golden treasure in the chest.”

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“Upon my word!” the soldier exclaimed, “that’s not a bad plan. But how much of the money am I to give you, old woman? I’ve a notion that you want your full share of the plunder.”

“I’m not asking for a single penny,” the witch declared. “The only thing I want you to bring me is an old tinder box which my grandmother left by mistake on a shelf in the third room, the last time she was down in the tree.”

“Well, then,” the soldier responded, “give me the rope to tie around my waist, and I’ll be gone.”

“Here it is,” the witch said; “and here is my blue checked apron.”

The soldier and the witch climbed the tree, and when he crawled down through the hole she remained on a branch outside with one end of the rope in her hands. In a little while, he had descended to a large hall which

was brightly lighted by more than a hundred lamps.

He opened the first door. Ugh! There sat the dog with eyes as large as teacups, staring at him. "You are a pretty fellow," the soldier said.

Then he spread the witch's apron on the floor and lifted the dog down on it. After that he filled his pockets with copper pennies from the chest, shut the lid, put the dog back into place, and passed on into the second apartment.

In this room he found the dog with eyes as large as saucers. "You had better not look at me so hard," the soldier said. "It will make your eyes weak." And he set the dog down on the witch's apron.

When he raised the lid of the chest, and beheld the vast quantity of silver money it contained, he threw all his copper pennies away in disgust, and hastened to fill all his

pockets and his knapsack as well with silver.

Now he went into the third room. The dog there actually had eyes as large as dinner plates, and they kept rolling round and round in his head like wheels. "Good day to you," the soldier said, and he lifted his cap respectfully, for he felt that such a monster of a dog was not to be dealt with lightly.

He stood still for a minute or two gazing at the creature. Then he removed him to the witch's apron on the floor, and opened the chest.

Oh! what a lot of gold there was in it. Yes, he would be satisfied now. He threw out all the silver money he had stuffed into his pockets and knapsack, and replaced it with gold. He even filled his hat and boots with gold—bright heavy gold! Such a burden of wealth did he have that he could hardly walk.

He banged the door of the room behind

him, and called up through the tree: "Hello, old witch! Pull me up."

"Have you got the tinder box?" the witch asked.

"Well, to be sure, I'd quite forgotten that!" the soldier shouted, "but I'll soon fetch it."

Back he went and got it from the shelf in the third room. Then the witch drew him up, and presently he stood again in the road. But what a change in his condition! Now his pockets, boots, knapsack, and hat were stuffed full of gold pieces. The old witch reached for the tinder box he held in his hand.

"Just tell me what you are going to do with it before I give it to you," the soldier said.

"That's no concern of yours," the witch retorted. "You've got your money. Pass me my tinder box this instant."

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“Take your choice,” the soldier said.
“Either tell me what you want with the tinder box, or go about your business.”

“I won’t tell you!” the witch screamed.

XV

THE SOLDIER IN TOWN

THE soldier thrust the tinder box into his pocket and walked off, leaving the witch shaking her fist at him and calling him ugly names. Presently he stopped and knotted all his money in the witch's apron. Then he slung the apron across his back, and went straight to the nearest town.

The town was large and fashionable, and the soldier walked into the very grandest hotel in the place, called for the best suite of rooms, and ordered the choicest and most expensive kinds of food for his supper. He was now a rich man with plenty of gold to spend, and he proposed to enjoy himself to the utmost.

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The servant who cleaned his boots could not help thinking that they were disgracefully shabby to belong to a gentleman who had taken such rooms and eaten such a supper. However, the next day the soldier provided himself with new boots and with very fine clothes, besides.

From the people at the hotel he learned about all the places of amusement in the town. They had much to say also concerning the king, and still more about his beautiful daughter.

“I would rather like to see her,” the soldier remarked.

“That’s impossible,” they said. “She dwells in a great copper palace surrounded by ever so many walls and towers. No man but the king goes to visit her there; for it has been foretold that she will marry a common soldier, and the king would not like that at all. He is going to prevent such a thing

ever happening by keeping her secluded in the copper palace.”

What they told the soldier only made his desire to see her keener, but as there appeared to be no way of realizing his wish, he turned his attention to other matters. He led a very merry life, went continually to the theater, and drove in the royal park. He gave money right and left, not only to the poor, but to all who asked him; for he knew by experience how miserable it was not to have a shilling in one's pocket.

He was always handsomely dressed, and he had a crowd of friends, who, one and all, declared he was a most capital fellow, and a real gentleman. That pleased our soldier uncommonly.

But as he was giving and spending every day, and never received anything in return, his money began to fail him. At last he had so little left that he removed from the splen-

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did hotel where he had lodged hitherto, and took refuge in a small chamber high up in an attic.

There he brushed his own boots, and mended his own clothes, and none of his friends ever came to see him, because there were so many stairs to go up that climbing them was quite fatiguing.

The evenings were very dark in the little garret, for the soldier could not afford to buy himself so much as a rushlight. After a time he remembered that there was a piece of a candle in the tinder box he had fetched out of the hollow tree. So he opened the box and found the bit of candle.

Then he took up the steel and the flint stone that were in the box, and in order to get a light struck the flint a blow with the steel. There was a flash of sparks, and at the same instant the door of the attic was pushed open. A dog came in. He had eyes

as large as teacups, and was the same dog the soldier had seen sitting on the chest of copper money in the cavern under the hollow tree.

The dog stood before the soldier, and asked, "What commands has my master for his slave?"

"Aha!" the soldier cried, "a fine sort of tinder box I possess, if it will provide me with whatever I want."

Then he said to the dog, "Fetch me some money at once."

The creature vanished, and lo! in half a minute he was back holding in his mouth a large bag full of copper pennies.

The soldier soon learned that by means of his tinder box he could call to his service any of the three dogs of the cavern he chose. If he struck the flint only once the dog in the first room came. If he struck it twice, the dog that watched over the silver answered

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his summons. If he struck it three times, the guardian of the golden treasure appeared.

He presently bought himself a new suit of clothes and went back to the princely apartments he had occupied. Then all his friends remembered him, and loved him as much as ever.

XVI

THE WONDERFUL DOGS

ONE evening it occurred to the soldier how ridiculous it was that no one was allowed to see the princess. By all accounts it appeared that she was very beautiful. But what was the good of that if she was always to be shut up in the copper palace with the many towers?

“Is there no way for me to see her?” he asked himself. “Where is my tinder box?”

He struck the flint, and before him stood the dog with eyes as large as teacups.

“I acknowledge that it is rather late to send you on an errand,” the soldier said. “But I want very much to see the princess, even if only for one minute.”

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The dog was out of the door instantly, and before the soldier had time to think of what he should say or do, the dog reappeared with the princess asleep on his back. So enchantingly beautiful was she that the soldier knelt down and kissed her hand. Then the dog carried her back to the palace.

The next morning, while the princess was at breakfast with the king and queen, she mentioned that she had dreamed a strange dream during the past night. It was about a big dog that had carried her off on his back to a soldier who had kissed her hand.

“A pretty sort of a dream, indeed!” the queen exclaimed.

Then it occurred to her that there might be more in the dream than appeared, and she insisted that one of the old ladies of the court should watch by the princess’s bedside on the following night to see if anything unusual happened.

The next evening the soldier found himself longing exceedingly to see the princess of the copper palace again. So he summoned the dog and ordered him to fetch her.

The dog went to the palace, took the princess on his back, and ran off as fast as he could. But the old lady who was watching by the princess's bedside put on a pair of magic boots, and followed quite as quickly. Soon the dog reached the hotel where the soldier was lodging, and the old lady saw him bound in at a window.

"Now I know what to do," she thought. Then she took a piece of chalk from her pocket and made a great white cross on the front door of the building, so that when daylight came she could be certain to find the place.

Afterward she returned to the palace. There she found that the princess had already been brought back, and she was free

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to go to bed. But the dog had seen her chalk mark, and he took another piece of chalk and put crosses on every front door in that part of the town.

Early in the morning, the king, the queen, the old court dame, and all the officers of the royal household set forth, every one of them curious to learn where the princess had been.

“Here is the place!” the king exclaimed as soon as he saw a street door with a cross chalked on it.

The queen was looking at another marked door. “My dear, where are your eyes?” she cried. “This is the house.”

“But there is a cross on the door beyond, and the door across the street has one on it, also,” the others said.

Indeed, they found crosses on so many doors that they were soon convinced their search was useless. What should they do

next? The queen finally devised a plan. She was a very wise and prudent woman, good for something besides sitting in a state carriage and looking grand and condescending.

With her gold scissors she snipped a piece of silk into proper shape, and then made a nice little bag of it. This bag she filled with flour, and when the princess went to bed she tied it to her waist. Lastly she cut a small hole in the bag so the flour would gradually sift out all the time the princess was moving.

That night the dog came again, took the princess on his back, and ran away with her to the soldier. Oh, how the soldier loved her, and how he wished he were a prince that he might have this beautiful princess for his wife!

The dog did not notice that the flour strewn the whole of the way from the palace

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to the soldier's window, and from there back to the palace. The next morning, by means of the streaks of flour, the king and queen easily discovered where their daughter had been taken; and they had the soldier seized and cast into prison.

How dark it was in the lonely cell where they shut him, and how wearisome! What made matters still worse, the jailer kept coming to the door to remind him that tomorrow he was to be hanged. This piece of news was by no means agreeable, and he was unable to think of any way to escape. He would not have been so helpless if he had had his tinder box, but he had left it in his room at the hotel.

When morning came, he looked through his narrow iron grating, and saw the people all hurrying out of the town to the place where he was to be hung. He could hear the drums beating, and presently he saw a com-

pany of soldiers marching past in the same direction.

Among the rest of the crowd, rushing by, was a shoemaker's apprentice in his leather apron and slippers. He hustled on with such speed that one of his slippers flew off, and bounded against the iron grating of the soldier's prison window.

"You need not hurry so, my boy," the soldier called out to him. "They can't do anything till I come. If you will oblige me by running to my lodgings and fetching me my tinder box, I'll give you a shilling."

The boy liked the idea of earning a shilling, and away he raced after the tinder box. He returned soon, and gave it to the soldier.

Outside the city a gallows had been erected, and round it were marshaled the soldiers with many thousands of people—men, women and children. A space was reserved at

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the very front where the judges and councilors sat, and behind them were the king and queen, each on a magnificent throne.

The soldier mounted the gallows, but while the executioner was preparing to fit the rope round his neck, he took out his tinder box and struck the flint. At once the dog with eyes as big as teacups stood before him. Then he struck two blows on the flint, and that brought the dog with eyes as big as saucers. Next he struck three blows, and the dog with eyes as big as dinner plates promptly appeared.

“Now help me, my dogs!” the soldier cried. “Don’t let me be hanged!”

Immediately, the three terrible dogs leaped on the judges and councilors, and threw some this way and some that.

“You must not touch me!” the king said.

But the dogs served him as they had the others, and he and the queen and the judges

and the councilors were all so frightened that they took to their heels and never stopped till they had left the kingdom.

As soon as they were well out of the way, the people shouted with one voice, "Good soldier, you shall be our king, and the beautiful princess shall be our queen!"

So he was conducted to the royal carriage, and he went to get the princess, while the three dogs bounded to and fro in front of the horses. The princess was made queen, and she liked that much better than living a prisoner in the copper palace. The bridal festivities lasted for eight days, and the three wizard dogs sat at the banquet table staring about them with their great eyes.

XVII

A WATCHFUL SERVANT

THERE was once a prince who was going to visit his lady love, the only daughter of a neighboring king. He required the services of an attendant. So he sent for his barber, a very trustworthy and well-behaved man, though rather odd in some of his ways.

The prince had the barber come to his palace, and told him of his proposed journey. In conclusion he said: "Peter, I want you to go along to assist me. You can be sure that I will reward you handsomely, and you shall lack for nothing in the way of food. But you must don my livery, salute me respectfully, hold my stirrup when I mount, and do everything that is required of a ser-

vant. Above all, you must not let me oversleep myself while we are on the way to my lady's palace, else we shall be late in arriving there."

"Sir," the barber said, "I will stand on guard while you are sleeping, and when you are awake I will protect you from all harm. But I beg you not to be annoyed with me, if, in trying to be useful to you, I unwittingly cause you some annoyance."

"My dear Peter," the prince responded, "say no more. Return to your shop, pack up whatever you need to carry on your journey, and return here as soon as you can this evening. If I am in bed when you arrive, you will know it is because I must get up tomorrow morning at five o'clock. See to it that you do not let me sleep beyond that time."

Peter hurried home, packed up the things he wanted to take with him on the journey,

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and then proceeded to the principal tavern to bid his friends farewell. They all drank to his health, and he returned the compliment so often that at last the wine began to affect him. Then he concluded to bid his friends good-by and go to the palace of the prince.

As he entered the courtyard, he remarked to himself, "I must wake his Highness at five o'clock."

He looked up toward the prince's bedroom. Only a dim light was burning there, and it was evident that the prince had retired to rest. Peter paused, and said: "Perhaps he may think I have forgotten all about his orders to rouse him at five o'clock. In that case he is doubtless lying awake, and his anxiety is not allowing him to get the sleep he ought to have."

So Peter seized a long slender cane, and used it to tap on the prince's window. He

kept on tapping until the prince came and looked out.

“Who is there?” the prince shouted.
“Who wants me?”

“It is I,” Peter replied. “I have not forgotten your orders. Tomorrow morning I will wake your Highness at five.”

“Very good,” the prince said, “but let me sleep a while, or I shall be tired when the morrow comes.”

After the prince had disappeared Peter sat down on a bench in the courtyard and thought of various things, taking no note as to whether the time was passing quickly or slowly.

Presently he heard a cock crow, and he imagined that the bird was heralding the day. Therefore he again seized the cane, and tapped loudly at his master’s window.

The prince lifted up the sash, and called out: “Who is there? What do you want?”

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“Sir, the cock has already crowed,” the barber informed him. “It must be time to rise.”

“Time to rise!” the prince repeated sharply. “You are mistaken. It is only half an hour since you woke me before.”

He closed the window with a bang, and Peter, sadly troubled because he feared he had given offense to the prince, began to think over all that his mother had told him about the anger of princes, and how much it was to be dreaded. His thoughts so disturbed him that he resolved to be revenged on the cock which had caused him to needlessly awaken his master.

Without further delay, he proceeded to the poultry yard near by. There he found the offender and his numerous family of hens. But when he made a rush to grab the cock, all the fowls began cackling in alarm as if a fox had broken in.

The prince heard the noise, ran to the window, and thrust out his head. "What is all that commotion about?" he demanded in a loud voice.

"Sir," Peter said, "I was trying to punish the cock which disturbed your rest a short time ago. I have got hold him now, and your Highness can go to sleep without further care. I will not forget to waken you at the proper time."

"Let the cock alone, and stay where you belong," the prince ordered. "If you break my rest again before five o'clock, I shall certainly punish you."

So saying, he retired to his bed.

"Ah!" Peter sighed, "since the days when cocks crowed in the Holy Land, they have always brought sorrow into the world. The proper place for that cock who has been disturbing the peace of his Highness the prince here tonight is in the kettle over the fire,

and that is where he would go if I had my way."

Peter now began to feel very sleepy. For a time he walked up and down the yard to keep awake. Then he lay down on the ground, and was soon fast asleep. After a while he dreamed that a gigantic robber attacked him. In his terror he screamed so loudly that he not only woke the prince, but every one else in the palace and all the dogs in the neighborhood.

The prince again rushed to the window, and arrived just in time to hear Peter yell: "Don't murder me! I will give you all!"

The prince ran down into the courtyard where he saw plainly that Peter was dreaming. So irritated was he, that he bestowed on the sleeper a hearty kick that made him jump to his feet.

The dazed Peter rubbed his eyes, and beheld the angry prince. He did not stay to

receive the censure he justly merited, but took to his heels, and ran home as fast as he could.

When he got into bed, he began regretting that he had so hastily left the service of the prince, who now would perhaps fail to start as early as he had planned. If the journey were delayed, his love affair might not prosper.

So the barber got up, saying: "I cannot rest easy until I have put things to rights. The prince shall have a sharper spur than ever I could buckle on."

With this thought in mind, he went to the front door of the palace and wrote on it with chalk the following words, "Peter, the barber, has gone on before your Highness to court the princess himself."

The next morning the prince read the notice on the door as he was starting on his journey, and it made him so jealous that he

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covered the distance to his lady-love in half the time he would otherwise have taken.

After that, Peter used to say, "A jealous man on horseback is first cousin to a flash of lightning."

XVIII

THE YOUNG FISHERMAN

LONG, long ago there lived by the sea a young fisherman named Urashi. He was a kindly lad, and a clever fisherman. Neither wind nor weather ever kept him from his fishing. He did not know what it was to be afraid, and no one else in the village where he lived dared venture so far out to sea.

The neighbors often shook their heads and said to his parents, "If your son keeps on being so reckless, he will try his luck some day once too often, and the waves will swallow him."

His father and mother told him what was said, but the village talk made no difference to him.

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One bright beautiful morning, when he had gone out in his boat as usual, he baited his hook, dropped his line into the water, and sat down to wait for a bite. In a little while he caught something, but it was not a fish. It was a great tortoise.

Urashi was delighted with his prize. He drew it into the boat and removed the hook. Then, to his astonishment, the tortoise began to speak.

“I would gladly live a little longer,” it said. “Be merciful and set me free. If you will let me go I will find a way to show my gratitude.”

“Well, I can soon catch some fish,” Urashi thought, “and they will be just as good to eat as this tortoise—in fact, better. Why should I kill the poor thing and keep it from enjoying all the years it may yet have to live? No, no! I will not be so cruel.”

Then he said to the tortoise, “You can

have your freedom," and he threw it back into the sea.

Shortly afterward he lay down in his boat and fell asleep. While he slept there came up from beneath the waves a beautiful girl. She got into the boat, and Urashi awoke.

"I am the daughter of the sea-king," she said, "and I live with my father in a splendid palace beyond the waters. It was not a tortoise which you caught just now, and which you were so kind as to throw back into the water instead of killing. It was me. I had taken that form to make a journey through the water. Now I invite you to return with me. You shall marry me, if you choose, and we will live happily together for a thousand years in the beautiful palace beyond the deep blue sea."

Then Urashi took one oar, and the sea-king's daughter took the other. They headed the boat straight out into the open ocean,

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and they rowed, and rowed, till, at last, they came to the palace where the sea-king lived and ruled over all the dragons and the tortoises and the fishes. The palace walls were of coral, and the trees round about had emeralds for leaves and rubies for fruit; and everything was as beautiful as it could be.

Urashi married the lovely princess, and they lived happily in the sea-king's palace for a year. Then he said to her: "I enjoy being here with you very much, yet I would like to visit my home, and see my father and mother and brothers and sisters. Let me go to them, I pray you. I will return soon."

"I don't like to have you go," she said. "I am afraid something dreadful will happen to you. However, if you cannot be contented otherwise, I give my permission."

"I shall be away only for a short time," Urashi told her.

“Go then,” the princess said; “and here is a magic box that you must carry along with you. Nothing can harm you as long as you have it in your possession, unless you open it. If you do that you never will be able to come back.”

Urashi promised to take great care of the box, and not to open it on any account. Then he got into a boat and rowed away to his own country.

But what had happened while he had been absent? Where had his father's cottage gone? What had become of the village in which he used to live? The mountains were there as before, but the trees on them had been cut off. The little brook that had run close by his father's house was still running, but there were no women washing clothes in it any more. Urashi wondered how everything could have changed so much in one short year.

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Two men chanced to come walking along the neighboring beach. Urashi went to them and said: "Can you tell me where the cottage is that used to stand by the brook yonder? It belonged to a fisherman who had a son named Urashi."

"What!" the man exclaimed, "do you speak of Urashi? He was drowned nearly four hundred years ago, while he was out on the sea fishing. His parents and his brothers and sisters, and all the children and grandchildren of those brothers and sisters died long before our time.

"Yes, Urashi was drowned. He went out in his boat to fish, and neither he nor his boat was seen afterward. It is an old, old story. How can you be so foolish as to ask after his father's cottage? That fell to pieces a great many years before any one now living can remember."

Then the thought flashed across Urashi's

mind that the sea-king's palace beyond the ocean must be in fairyland, and that one day there was probably as long as a year in the human world. Therefore, in reality, he had been away hundreds of years.

Of course, it was of no use for him to stay where he was any longer, now that all his friends were dead and buried, and even their homes gone. So Urashi was in a great hurry to get back to his wife in the sea-king's palace. The lacing of his shoe was loose, and he put down the box the princess had given him while he stopped to tie the lacing.

One of the men picked up the box, which was curiously carved and colored. Just as Urashi turned to get the box the man lifted the lid to look inside. No sooner was the lid up than a white cloud came forth and floated away over the sea.

Urashi shouted to the cloud to stop and come back into the box, for he recollected

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at once how strictly the princess had commanded that the box should not be opened. But the cloud floated on until it disappeared.

He knew now that he never would be able to go again to the sea-king's palace, and he rushed about and screamed with sorrow. But soon he could not run nor shout any more. His hair had grown as white as snow, his face had become wrinkled, and his back was bent like that of a very old man. Then his breath stopped, and he fell dead on the beach. If he had taken better care of the box, he might still be living with the princess in the palace beyond the blue sea waves, where the trees have leaves of emerald, and rubies grow on them for fruit.



Characters from

